DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 446 383 EA 030 677

AUTHOR	Cooke, William; Graham, Margie; Derlin, Roberta L.
TITLE	New Mexico School Accountability: A Step toward Performance Based Funding?
PUB DATE	1999-03-00
NOTE	16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Finance Association (Seattle, WA, March 17-21, 1999).
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Accountability; Classroom Techniques; Elementary Secondary Education; *Financial Support; Outcomes of Education; *Performance Based Assessment; Public Schools; *Rural Schools; *School Districts; *Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS	*New Mexico

ABSTRACT

This study examined the degree of understanding among district and school level personnel in New Mexico regarding recent changes implemented in the State's accountability reporting system. The results are being used to design two further research activities: one to explore the relationship between accountability information and classroom practice, and a second to examine the use of regression models as a technique for examining schooling outcomes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with district and school administrators in two urban and in four rural school districts. Two of the rural districts were from the lowest spending districts and two from among the highest spending districts in the state. In the rural school districts accountability reporting was most commonly assigned to an existing central office staffer as an add-on responsibility. Urban districts were able to designate an individual with particular and primary responsibility for accountability reporting. As a result, central staffers in the urban districts were more fully informed about changed to the accountability system. An appendix contains the interview schedule. (Contains 18 references.) (DFR)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 446 383

New Mexico School Accountability: A Step Toward Performance Based Funding?

William Cooke

Margie Graham

Roberta L. Derlin

New Mexico State University

American Educational Finance Association

March 18 - 20, 1999

Seattle, WA

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

R. Derlin

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

1

Draft: Please do not quote without permission

EA 030677

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Purpose and Problem Statement

This study examined the degree of understanding among district and school level personnel in New Mexico regarding recent changes implemented in the State's accountability reporting system. The results are being used to design two further research activities; one to explore the relationship between accountability information and classroom practice, and a second to examine the use of regression models as a technique for examining schooling outcomes.

Introduction

"We really want our schools to be absolutely accountable for the resources we put into our schools" (Governor G. Johnson, TV Interview, November 1998).

"How much more money should be put into an educational system that is failing. More and More dollars are going in - yet the system is less and less accountable. What do we have to lose *(if we go to vouchers)*" (Governor G. Johnson, TV Interview, March, 1999)

Prior to the 1998-99 school year, New Mexico school districts were required to report about the condition of public schooling through annual reports coordinated with district Educational Plans for Student Success (EPSS). EPSS were implemented by district school boards and evaluated by methods that relied on self-reported data and progress assessments. The State of New Mexico had mandated that school districts publish a 47-item school district report card in the local paper under the EPSS system. This provided public information the community could use to see how well their school district was doing related to educating all students who attended their schools. These reports included enrollment statistics and analyses of the student population, student achievement results including testing results and drop out rates, financial information, staffing analyses, and the results of parental involvement surveys. This method, designed to

encourage locally developed school improvement processes has come under fire. The broad discretion given in EPSS development, implementation, and evaluation has resulted in widely varying progress among districts.

To achieve greater consistency in school improvement among the districts, the State of New Mexico Department of Education implemented conditions set forth in Annual School District Accountability Report (SB997) that overhauled the 47-item report card (McCoy & Weil, 1998). The edicts replaced the contents of the previous report cards with a five-item student-centered report card that would be published in the district by November 15, 1998. The five variables the new report card would address were student achievement (measured by state-mandated examination scores), overall attendance percentage, overall dropout percentage, parental and community involvement (based on parental involvement plan/goals and benchmarks) and school safety (based on self-report of records from each school principal).

While the newly implemented system continues to be considered in support of locally developed school improvement planning, centralization of information reporting and analysis has been imposed and the system now includes a mechanism to designate schools eligible for school improvement/intervention - a designation for low performing schools and financial awards to high performing schools. Multiple regression modeling is used to identify low and high performing schools.

The Incentives for School Improvement Act (22-13A-5 NMSA 1978), enacted by the 1997 New Mexico legislature, mandated that incentive awards would be given to top 10% of performing schools in the state. Following mandates, the State Department of Education set up standardized tests scores and the New Mexico High School Competency Exam results as the measures of student achievement. The standardized test scores for grades 4, 6, and 8, and the

NMHSCE for all high school students who took the exam that year were regressed on three socioeconomic variables, mobility, number of students receiving free and reduced lunch, and number of Limited English Proficiency students. The schools that showed the highest positive change between expected scores and actual scores on the respective tests would be deemed "high improving schools" and would receive financial incentives of no less than $1,000 per school. Approximately 100 schools would be eligible for financial remuneration each year with the total amount of the award ascertained by per pupil allocations (presently $81/student). Conversely, schools that demonstrated a performance lower than expected based on the regression model would be designated in need of intervention provided by School Improvement Teams coordinated by the NM State Department of Education. Presently, twelve schools have been designated as being in need of intervention. While varying strategies for intervention may be applied, approximately $300,000 for each school will be applied to support "improvement schools". A $3.6M legislative request has been made for 1999 and $7.2 M has been requested for 2000 when it is anticipated that the number of improvement schools will grow to 24.

Methods

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with district and school administrators in two urban and in four rural school districts. Two of the four rural districts were randomly chosen from among the lowest spending districts and two from among the highest spending districts in the state. Tables One and Table Two identify some of the key indicators relevant to the districts included in the study.

Table 1 - New Mexico School District Sample - Selected Statistics

School District	Per Pupil Expenditure (Net Operating)	Membership	% Children in Pover
High 1	$5,504	382	52.5
High 2	$5,332	257	71.5
Low 1	$3,665	3,044	31.4
Low 2	$3,463	2,945	39.0
Urban 1	$4,125	87,253	24.1
Urban 2	$3,824	22,324	32.2

Source: NM State Department of Education

Table 2 - New Mexico School District Sample - Formula Funding Indicators

School District	At Risk Index Current	At Risk Index Proposed	Dropout Rate	Mobility	LEP Rate
High 1	.0355	.0594	.070	.439	.827
High 2	.0626	.0595	.082	.315	.069
Low 1	.0632	.0648	.028	.237	.268
Low 2	.0402	.0660	.091	.464	.102
Urban 1	.0824	.0150	.101	.335	.181
Urban 2	.0807	.0633	.082	.281	.121

Source: NM State Department of Education

In each district, a central office staff member with responsibility for accountability reporting, a high school, middle school, and elementary school principal resulting in a total of 24 interviews. The interview schedule is shown in Appendix A.

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to ascertain the degree of understanding school personnel had of the present accountability reporting requirements, their sense of the changes being implemented in accountability reporting system, the perceived fairness of the newly implemented system and its likelihood of facilitating school improvement.

Findings and Conclusions

Rural Sites

As was not unexpected, it was observed in the rural school districts that accountability reporting was most commonly assigned to an existing central office staffer as an add-on responsibility. As a result, understanding of the specific changes in the accountability system was limited in the rural districts. In most cases, central staff persons were not familiar with regression techniques or of the particular factors included in the regression model.

Among school level personnel in the rural districts, understanding of the new accountability system and the regression modeling that is used to determining low and high performing schools is very limited at this time. Only one rural principal was specifically aware of regression techniques and the particular factors (limited English proficiency, free and reduced lunch eligibility, and mobility) used in the model. Rural principals demonstrated considerable concern about over-reliance on test scores as a dominant measure of student achievement. The inability of an accountability model relying heavily on the analysis of student test scores in determining low and high performing schools to fully reflect the diversity in home and community factors in New Mexico was a consistently demonstrated concern.

In some cases, school principals were unaware that financial awards had been made in their own district. Most school level personnel in the rural districts considered the use of financial awards as an improper or inadequate means to positively influence school performance. This is

not to say that the availability of a financial reward *per se* wasn't viewed as positive, because principals viewed extra resources as valuable. However, there was a genuine concern demonstrated for the effects of monetary awards on equity among schools within a district and rural personnel suggested that the larger or more wealthy school districts would enjoy an advantage in competing for these awards.

Whether or not any school had been designated as an improvement school in their own or another school district was not generally known with certainty among rural school principals. Since rural principals were not well informed that considerable resources would be applied to schools designated as improvement schools, the designation was viewed as punitive more than supportive of local EPSS. A NM State Department School Improvement Team descending was not generally considered among rural school principals as a positive event.

Urban Sites

One of the main differences between urban and rural sites was that the urban school districts have been able to designate an individual with particular and primary responsibility for accountability reporting. As a result, the central staffers in the urban districts were more fully informed about changes to the accountability system than their rural counterparts who had to fulfill multiple roles. Central office staff in the urban districts were familiar with regression modeling, the specific factors included in the model being applied, and the challenges of developing a more highly centralized data system within the state of New Mexico. The mobility factor in the regression model was identified as the most problematic in its construction and inclusion in the model. Urban and rural school districts clearly differed in their ability to devote human and other resources to the centralized demand for increased/improved accountability reporting.

Urban school principals, however, were more similar to their rural counterparts. In the urban school districts, principals demonstrated a similar limited level of understanding of the new accountability system. Generally, urban principals were not familiar with regression modeling and could not accurately identify specific factors in the model being applied. What was most interesting is that urban principals were more likely to have been involved in meetings regarding the new accountability system, had received more extensive materials, and had quite concrete perceptions about the regression model factors - just inaccurate perceptions. A specific example is the principal who identified the importance of the inclusion of the number of special education students as a factor in the new regression modeling as one positive improvement even though this is not a factor in the new accountability reporting analysis system.

The urban principals were also similar to their rural counterparts in their concerns - over reliance on student achievement test scores in the model and the inability of a more highly centralized system to fully reflect the diversity in New Mexico communities.

Urban principals did demonstrate a greater level of familiarity with the financial award component of the new accountability system and the significance of the improvement school designation than their rural counterparts. The urban principals could more frequently identify schools within and outside their own school districts that had received financial awards.

Urban principals also differed from their rural counterparts in their perceptions of fairness in the system. The urban principals more frequently identified that the new system would fairly distribute financial awards.

General

Most personnel in rural and urban districts indicated that they had been informed about the changes in accountability by central staff in their own districts at meetings or via distributed

materials. Some personnel had participated in NM State Department of Education meetings. However, understanding of the new accountability system varies considerably among the districts. It is clear that there is general understanding that the system for accountability has changed from district level of analysis to a school level of analysis in all districts and that the NM State Department of Education has assumed a more dominant role in accountability reporting is accurately perceived. However, the relationship of this greater centralization on the locally developed EPSS has not yet fully emerged.

School district personnel demonstrated a diversity of views about the perceived fairness of the financial awards system and the potential negative effects on equity in resource allocations among schools within a district and among school districts in the state.

The possibility that the designation of low performing schools as improvement schools will have negative effects on school personnel is likely to become a general concern in implementation of the new system. Improved communication about the positive aspects of additional funding resulting from being designated an improvement school may ameliorate this implementation challenge. However, it is difficult to envision how further improved communication can alter the perception among school principals that having a centralized NM State Department School Improvement Team descend on the school is punitive, rather than supportive, of locally developed school improvement plans.

References

Anonymous. (1997). Educating parents. *The Futurist, 21,* 62-63.

Brunner, C. C. (1998) The Legacy of Disconnection Between the Public School and Their Communities: Suggestions for Policy. *Educational Policy, 12,* 244-266.

Callahan, R. E. (1962). *Education and the cult of efficiency.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Cassell, R. N. (1996). School accountability beyond test scores-a student-centered approach: Focus on student-not subject matter. *Education, 116,* 580-586.

Cibulka, J. C. & Derlin, R. L. (1998). Authentic education accountability policies: Implementation of state initiatives in Colorado and Maryland. In Macperson, R. J. S. (1998). *The politics of accountability: Educative and international perspectives.* (pp. 79-92). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Derlin, R. L. (1996) New Mexico school finance: An historical perspective. East Lansing, MI: National Center for Research on Teacher Learning. (ERIC document Reproduction Service No. Ed 401 617)

Frymier, J. (1996). Accountability in Education: Still an Evolving Concept. Fastback 395. ED 404758.

Galvin, P. F. (1998). The Politics of Research on Educational Productivity. *Educational Policy, 13,* 136-151.

Ginsberg, R. and Berry, B. (1998). The Capability for Enhancing Accountability. *Educational Policy, 12,* 48-66.

Glasser, W. (1997). "Choice therapy" and student success. The Education Digest, 63, 12-

21.

Macpherson, R. J. S., Cibulka, J. G., MonkD. H., & Wong, K. K. (1998). Editors' Introduction to the Politics of Accountability: Challenges in Retrospect. *Educational Policy, 12,* 5-17.

McCoy, J. & Weil, K. (1998, June). Accountability Legislation. Paper presented at the meeting of the EPSS Statewide Conference.

National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Newmann, R. M., King, M. B., & Rigdon, R. (1997). Accountability and school performance: Implications from restructuring schools. *Harvard Educational Review, 67,* 41-47

Strum, H. P. (1995). Public School Accountability. Background Paper 95-14. East Lansing: MI: National Center for Research on Teacher Learning. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 414 649)

Vannata, R. A. (1996). Risk factors related to suicidal behavior among male and female adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 25,* 149-158.

Vissing, Y. M. & Diament, J. (1997). Housing distress among high school students. *Social Work, 42,* 31-41.

Walker, R. P., Grantham-McGregor, S. M., Himes, J. H., Williams, S., & Duff, E. M. (1998). School performance in adolescent Jamaican girls. Associations with health, social and behavioural characteristics, and risk factors for dropout. *Journal of Adolescence, 21,* 109-122

Appendix A - Interview Schedule

Hello, my name is _____ and I am a graduate student at NMSU working with Dr. Roberta Derlin in the Department of Educational Management and Development. We are asking you to participate in an interview regarding issues in accountability reporting in New Mexico. Your responses and comments will help us with our research which may at some future time be presented at a conference or published as a paper. No individual will be identified or quoted directly. Your conversation is confidential. We will be happy to send you a copy of any paper that is prepared.

Name of Person: Phone Number:
Position Title:
Years in this position:
Years in this district:
Years in K-12 Education:
Teaching/Professional History:
Mailing address if paper is requested:

First I want to explore with you some issues related to the NM School Report Card process.

How would you describe your position duties as they relate to the NM School Report Card process for your district/school:

What is your understanding of how the NM School Report Cards are used by your district/school:

Now I'd like to find out information about your understanding of some of the additional accountability reporting requirements that have been recently implemented in New Mexico.

Describe your understanding of the recent changes in accountability reporting and how these changes are affecting your district:

Can you describe how eligibility for financial rewards is determined?

Have you studied how regression works? Do you think the regression model used in the new system includes the important factors for your district?

Describe the important factors for your district that are missing, if any?

Were you informed in some official way about the new accountability reporting system that distributes financial rewards to some school? If so, How were you officially informed of the implementation of the new accountability reporting system?

How much information did you receive about the new accountability reporting system before its implementation?

If you weren't officially informed about the new system, how have you learned about the new system?

Have you been given or taken an opportunity to provide feedback to the NMSDE regarding changes in accountability reporting? If so, how were your comments received?

Do you anticipate these comments will influence implementation of the revised

accountability reporting system? If so, what changes in implementation do you think/know will be made?

Do you feel the new accountability reporting system will benefit your school district?

Do you feel the new accountability system is an improvement over the former NM School Report Card system? Please explain

Do you feel each district and school has a fair chance to achieve recognition status and get a financial award?

Have any schools in your district achieved recognition status? If so obtain name of school and name of school principal. Do you know the amount of financial award the school received?

Any other comments on the changes in accountability reporting or its implementation?

ATTACH A COPY TO HANDWRITTEN NOTES FROM EACH INTERVIEW

Hello, my name is _____ and I am a graduate student at NMSU working with Dr. Roberta Derlin in the Department of Educational Management and Development. We are asking you to participate in an interview regarding issues in accountability reporting in New Mexico. Your responses and comments will help us with our research which may at some future time be presented at a conference or published as a paper. No individual will be identified or quoted directly. Your conversation is confidential. We will be happy to send you a copy of any paper that is prepared. *

Name of Person: Phone Number:

Position Title:

Years in this position:

Years in this district:

Years in K-12 Education:

Teaching/Professional History:

* Mailing Address if paper is requested:

First I want to explore with you some issues related to the NM School Report Card process.

How would you describe your position duties as they relate to the NM School Report Card process for your district/school:

What is your understanding of how the NM School Report Cards are used by your district/school:

Now I'd like to find out information about your understanding of some of the additional accountability reporting requirements that have been recently implemented in New Mexico.

Describe your understanding of the recent changes in accountability reporting and how these changes are affecting your district:

Can you describe how eligibility for financial rewards is determined?

Have you studied how regression works? Do you think the regression model used in the new system includes the important factors for your district?

For our information only: the regression model examines the relationship between grade-in-question achievement test scores and LEP, free and reduced lunch, and mobility factors

Describe the important factors for your district that are missing, if any?

Were you informed in some official way about the new accountability reporting system that distributes financial rewards to some school? If so, How were you officially informed of the implementation of the new accountability reporting system?

How much information did you receive about the new accountability reporting system before its implementation?

If you weren't officially informed about the new system, how have you learned about the new system?

Have you been given or taken an opportunity to provide feedback to the NMSDE regarding changes in accountability reporting? If so, how were your comments received?

Do you anticipate these comments will influence implementation of the revised accountability reporting system? If so, what changes in implementation do you think/know will be made?

Do you feel the new accountability reporting system will benefit your school district?

Do you feel the new accountability system is an improvement over the former NM School Report Card system? Please explain

Do you feel each district and school has a fair chance to achieve recognition status and get a financial award?

Have any schools in your district achieved recognition status? If so obtain name of school and name of school principal. Do you know the amount of financial award the school received?

Any other comments on the changes in accountability reporting or its implementation?